



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 20 October 2026

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of question time proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged with the Hansard office as soon as possible.

Tuesday, 20 October 2026

Questions without notice:

Justice—legislation	1
Public schools—funding	2
Public schools—funding	4
Public schools—staffing	6
Public schools—funding	7
Housing—debt to commonwealth.....	8
Phillip—proposed 25-metre public pool.....	9
ACT Policing.....	10
Corrections—electronic monitoring of alleged offenders.....	11
Corrections—enterprise bargaining	12
Crime—knife-related crime	13
Carers—support	14
Public schools—funding	15
Justice and Community Safety Directorate—employee found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct	17
Majura Primary School—funding.....	18
Transport Canberra—passenger experience.....	19
Justice and Community Safety Directorate—employee found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct	21

Questions without notice

Justice—legislation

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Human Rights. Despite running equal last in the Australian Council on Smoking and Health table on the states and territories regarding the effectiveness of compliance in this space, your government has not moved in any meaningful way on closure laws. Last week, one of the government ministers cited human rights concerns as one of the things holding up this process. Can you explain how closing down an illegal tobacco retailer with likely links to organised crime would contravene that individual's human rights?

DR PATERSON: I will take that question seeing as those were my comments. Every minister in the ACT government has a requirement under law to implement a human rights framework. The Canberra Liberals should know this—they have been in this place long enough—yet they seem to have a really ad hoc application of human rights—

Mr Cocks: On a point of order. The minister has very quickly moved into debating the question.

MR SPEAKER: I have to agree with you; she has. I ask you to answer the question, not to debate what the Liberal Party's position may or may not be, please, Minister.

DR PATERSON: We apply a very rigorous human rights framework to every piece of legislation that we develop. As I said on radio last week, human rights is one part of the consideration. We look at the evidence broadly in terms of making the arguments for the bills that we develop.

We have been very clear and consistent. Minister Stephen Smith, when she introduced and passed the bill last year, was very clear that there would be a second tranche of legislation that would come at the end of this year. We have been entirely consistent, and consistent with the federal government, that there would be another tranche of legislation by the end of the year. We have been working with federal colleagues and counterparts as well as the tobacco commissioner around the legislation and what we are progressing. We will have legislation in December that will have serious criminal penalties and closure laws to address illicit tobacco and vapes.

MR PARTON: Despite talking a big talk, Minister, is it acceptable that the ACT is running equal last on the ACOSH table?

DR PATERSON: We have been very clear about the time lines for our legislation. Victoria only passed their closure laws five weeks ago. We are a smaller jurisdiction than other states. We have had to turn around significant firearms reform over the past year—unplanned reform. A significant focus of the Police Ministers Council has been firearms safety and tobacco reform. We are equally committed to both areas of reform and working with our federal colleagues.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, does the government's decision to not proceed with the promise of ankle bracelets for domestic violence offenders contravene the human rights of victims?

MS TOUGH: Mr Speaker, was that a new question or a supplementary?

MR SPEAKER: It was a supplementary.

MS TOUGH: Mrs Morris, could I ask you to repeat the question, please?

MRS MORRIS: Certainly. Does the government's decision to not proceed with the promise of ankle bracelets for domestic violence offenders contravene the human rights of victims?

Ms Orr: A point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your guidance on whether the supplementary question is within the scope of the initial question, given that it was on human rights regarding illegal tobacco?

MR SPEAKER: It is questionable—I accept that—because the original question was specifically related to tobacco.

Mr Cocks: On the original point of order, Mr Speaker: the original question was in fact on the application of the human rights approach.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: It is line ball. I will get some advice from the Clerk on this.

Based on that advice, I am still of the view that it is line ball, but I am going to agree with the government on this one. I think that the question really did relate to the human rights and tobacco. I think that, although there is a human rights element to it, bending to ankle bracelets was a step beyond. So I accept the point of order. We will move to a new question.

Public schools—funding

MS LEE: My question is for the Minister for Education. Minister, data obtained from the *Canberra Times* showed the four specialist schools were facing a combined cut to their budget of almost \$10 million. You have repeatedly said, and I quote, “No specialist school will receive less funding in 2027 than in 2026,” citing the \$7 million in additional funding they will have access to but refusing to say where the shortfall of \$3 million will come from.

Minister, I will ask you again: if these schools are to receive a funding cut of almost \$10 million as reported, and you have stated publicly that they will have access to \$7 million in additional funding, where is the shortfall of almost \$3 million coming from?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will refer Ms Lee to the last time I responded to this question in the last sitting week, and I was very clear. There is also an exceptions pool of funding that is available, which Ms Lee is well aware of, that can be used to support any shortfall. I really would encourage Ms Lee to stop scaremongering parents of children and young people in specialist schools. We have been clear that specialist schools will not see a reduction in funding from 2026 to 2027. There is both a specific

allocation for specialist schools—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Orr: A point of order, Mr Speaker. I know the minister is not too bothered by the interjections, but I'm finding it hard to follow. There has been quite a few, and it's the first sitting day of a two-week period.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Orr: They're still going, Mr Speaker

MR SPEAKER: Members of the opposition, if you could just dial it down a bit, that would be helpful. Minister?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There is both a specific allocation that is related to specialist schools, and there is an exceptions process to ensure that we are working through with every school so that they can deliver efficient, effective, excellent education to the students in the ACT and surrounding regions. I do not know how many more times I have to say this before Ms Lee will stop scaremongering parents of children and young people with disabilities.

Mr Cocks: A point of order.

MR SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Cocks?

Mr Cocks: A point of order on the accusations of scaremongering; I think it has been discussed before that it was possibly unparliamentary. And the minister is moving into debating.

MR SPEAKER: I will give you one but not both. Scaremongering we are allowing, but I do agree that the minister has to answer the question. Minister, you do default into accusations about what the opposition may or may not be doing, and that is debating, so I would ask you not to do that.

MS LEE: Minister, can you please inform the Assembly of how much is in the "exceptions bucket", as you have referred to it, and how that is to offset the almost \$50 million in cuts across the entire public school system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Again, as we have discussed, I do not know where Ms Lee got the \$50 million in cuts. We have allocated more than \$40 million in additional funding in 2026-27 versus 2025-26—in additional funding for the 2027 school year—and we have not reduced overall funding for the ACT public education system. Ms Lee is just wrong about that. She knows, and we have said publicly that the exceptions pool is \$8 million.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: But we also have other funding to support students with disability and to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and we are

working through budgets right now with principals and with schools. Last week the principals were asked to provide back a budget tool with some substantial information to the ACT Education Directorate. The vast majority of schools provided that information in detail last week. That is being worked through over the next couple of weeks, with an expectation that staffing profiles and budgets will be finalised in week 5 of this term.

MR COCKS: Minister, can you confirm, given your explanation just now, that the entire exceptions fund will go to specialist schools and therefore not be available for other public schools?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No. I am not quite sure where the shadow Treasurer gets his maths from. If it were the case that it was a \$10 million gap—which I am not confirming, but if it were—and we had \$7 million specifically for specialist schools and we had another \$8 million, that would mean \$3 million of the \$8 million would be going to specialist schools, which would leave another \$5 million, so *prima facie* Mr Cocks is incorrect.

Public schools—funding

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education, because she is doing a stellar job at the moment!

Minister, data obtained by the *Canberra Times* shows some of the ACT's most disadvantaged schools are facing the largest budget cuts. Kingsford Smith School is set to lose almost \$3.5 million, Caroline Chisholm School around \$1.5 million and Theodore Primary School about eight per cent of its budget. Minister, your directorate has justified these cuts by saying there needed to be more focus on equity and need. If that is the case, why are some of our most disadvantaged schools facing the largest budget cuts?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you. I would again refer Ms Lee to the fact that has been repeatedly indicated that school budgets have not been finalised. I am very well aware that Kingsford Smith School had a significant additional injection of resources a couple of years ago to address the challenges that that school was facing. That has been effective, and that school is now doing very, very well, but the significant reduction that would be indicated by—

Ms Lee interjecting—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Mr Speaker, honestly.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Lee, I ask that you not do as many interjections, if at all, because you saw how it went last time.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Simply repeating it does not make it true.

We are very well aware that simply applying the student resource allocation to Kingsford Smith School would see the removal of that substantial increase in funding that had been allocated to that school to address the challenges it faced. That is why it

was already on the list from the get-go, as a number of other schools were, as schools that would need to be worked through as part of this exceptions process and through the broader support process between the Education Directorate and schools. That is the process that we are currently working through. Any assertions that Ms Lee makes about reductions in funding to any school at this point are not accurate.

MS LEE: Minister, what specific modelling did the government use to determine that schools serving high levels of disadvantage should receive less funding, and will you release that modelling publicly?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Ms Lee is welcome to have yet another briefing on school resourcing if she would like one. I have responded to questions on notice, and I am aware that I have got more yet to respond to in relation to the data that was available to the Education Directorate that determined the initial student resource allocation and adjustment-based resourcing model funding or budgets that were provided to schools, with very clear advice to principals that there were going to have to be adjustments and that the Education Directorate did not have all of the information available to it about the individual pressures that schools were going to be facing. This is because we are moving from a largely autonomous system to a more centralised system, and this is the first time that we have done budgets in this way. Based on the resourcing model—there is some information that has been made available, I believe, or may be made available tomorrow on the Education Directorate website, and I have asked for further information about how that model works. Ms Lee, as the shadow education minister, I believe has had a briefing and can have another briefing. She can have as many briefings as she wants until she gets through her head what this model was and that we have another process that we are currently going through with principals.

MR PARTON: Minister, how can parents and students—and I will be meeting with in Theodore in the coming days—have confidence that these cuts are about equity rather than budget savings when schools with some of the highest levels of need are facing some of the largest budget cuts?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I just reject the premise of the Leader of the Opposition's question, because I have talked repeatedly about the process that we are going through. I think it is really important that principals understand, if we applied the model strictly and reallocated resources in the way that was recommended through the schools resourcing review, what the impact would be if we treated every school the same in terms of those resources. On the basis of the information that is available to the Education Directorate, that is what that outcome would look like. However, we have also said that we understand that each school is different and each school will have specific circumstances that need to be worked through with the Education Directorate, and that is the process that is currently underway. Seeing as he has asked for it, my advice to the Leader of the Opposition in meeting with Theodore Primary parents and the school community is this: do not scaremonger; actually reassure them that the Education Directorate is working closely with—

Mr Parton: Do you want to come with me?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I would love to come with you, Mr Parton. I have asked specifically to organise some meetings with P & Cs and other groups. I have met with

ACT Parents a couple of times. I am happy to do that, but what I would really appreciate is if any member of this place is meeting with school communities, reassure them that we have heard what they are saying, we have heard their concern. I understand that this is a difficult time for school communities, but the Education Directorate is working with school leaders to ensure that they have the resourcing that they need to deliver excellent education to all of our students next year.

Public schools—staffing

MISS NUTTALL: My question is also to the Minister for Education. Minister, this week educators are having to take industrial action yet again, with actions and school closures all over Canberra every single morning this week. It is now more than 15 months since educators' claims were first lodged. Minister, when will the directorate resolve bargaining with the AEU so that no more strikes will be necessary?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. It is important and that is why we have been engaging very closely with the union to ensure we can settle bargaining as quickly as possible. Last week the Education Directorate had a full day workshop with the Australian Education Union ACT branch to talk about the staffing guarantee claim that the union has made, which is a high priority for them, and how that could potentially be resolved in a way that is acceptable to management, to the union and to staff. They also had a separate meeting that went for a number of hours working through all of the claims and clause drafting that is currently going backwards and forwards between the union and the Education Directorate.

I believe the union has been clear that bargaining is now progressing well. We are certainly continuing to consider claims and we are really hoping to get a further offer to the union that goes through all of the clause drafting and claims in the next couple of weeks so that we can get this agreement out to ballot. I have heard very clearly from the union they would like this agreement to go out to ballot, and that is also our objective.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, do you commit to resolving negotiations before the end of this school year so that strikes do not continue next year?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. We are certainly doing our best to achieve that.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how will the directorate be addressing the issue of split, collapsed and cancelled classes in their next offer?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Braddock for the supplementary. As I said in the response to the first question, there was a full day workshop last week with the union to talk about the staffing guarantee claim, which specifically addresses the issue of split and collapsed classes and how you ensure that schools are appropriately staffed when teachers are away, particularly when they are away unexpectedly.

The directorate had already provided a draft clause to the union that explicitly addressed split and collapsed classes. One of the things we need to understand better is what the incidence of split and collapse classes is, because the directorate does not have central

information about that. We certainly understand that the incidence of those has been increasing and that is exactly what that conversation about the staffing guarantee claim is aimed to do. I understand that excellent progress was made in that workshop last week.

Public schools—funding

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, during the last sitting period, you indicated that school budgets were not yet finalised, in response to questioning on school budget cuts. When asked about how many schools had accessed the exceptions process pool of \$8 million, you indicated that this “iterative process” was ongoing and that no schools had accessed the funds yet. Can you please provide an update on how many schools have accessed the exceptions funding pool process and what the criteria and process for accessing that are?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the question. As I indicated, there is currently a process underway. The principals completed a school budgeting tool last week. The vast majority of schools have provided that back to the directorate, or had yesterday, when I had my briefing. They are currently finalising what the assessment process looks like, to work through the exceptions process.

In answer to Ms Clay’s first question, no schools have yet accessed that funding, because that process is still underway, and those criteria are being refined at the moment. There is a pretty clear initial set of criteria which cover the kinds of things that you would expect, in terms of work health and safety, financial sustainability, staffing issues et cetera. But those are currently being finalised, in terms of the exact wording and how that will be worked through the assessment panel process.

MS CLAY: Minister, are principals aware of those draft criteria, and when will those draft criteria be finalised?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Those criteria will be finalised this week. I am not sure what conversations the directorate has had with the principals about that draft. I know that some people will have been involved in more detailed conversations. I will take on notice the question about what meetings have been had with principals about this. Regularly, there are drop-in sessions; there are communications with principals. I would encourage all principals to engage with their executive education lead. There are network meetings of principals in the specific networks with their EELs to talk through this process. All of this process is being done collaboratively with principals and, from this week, also with school communities, to undertake a risk assessment process.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, principals have told us that they do not know about these criteria. What specific official communications have they received about the criteria for accessing funds?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There is an ongoing conversation between the executive education leads for the networks of principals and the principals themselves. I have also heard, in relation to this, that principals have different levels of information in relation to this process and have been very clear with the directorate that they need to provide regular communication. That is one of the things that we have been talking about in our

meetings: a rhythm of communication to principals and to school communities that will ensure that people understand all the information and the process that is occurring. Certainly, once the criteria and process are finalised, the Education Directorate will be communicating again with principals. But I would be very surprised if principals were not aware at this point that there is an exceptions process, given how much this has been talked about publicly, as well as the internal conversations.

Housing—debt to commonwealth

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Homelessness. During senate estimates hearings on 22 October 2019, while in opposition, Senator Gallagher criticised the federal coalition government for not agreeing to forgive the ACT's historic housing debt. She said, "You are in a position of power; you get to sign it off." Senator Gallagher is now the minister for finance, so she is in a position to sign it off. In 2013, the federal Labor government forgave the bulk of South Australia's historic housing debt, and in 2019 the federal Liberal government forgave Tasmania's historic housing debt. Between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2025, the ACT made \$187.67 million in interest repayments alone, for this historic housing debt. Minister, since taking on the housing portfolio, given the scale of this issue, have you taken any steps to get the debt waived? If so, what steps have you taken?

MS ORR: In regard to the historic housing debt, the ACT government has written multiple times to the federal government and had many ongoing discussions with them around waiving the housing debt.

Since coming into the portfolio, I have sought briefings on the representations that have been made and the opportunities for further representations. I am still considering how we may best progress those, as opposed to just repeating what has already been covered. I understand that there are ongoing discussions ongoing across multiple jurisdictions, who might make the same observations that Mr Emerson makes around these debts which are held by a number of jurisdictions. And, certainly, I am making enquiries with my counterparts in those jurisdictions, as to where there may be commonalities.

MR EMERSON: Minister, what is the current outstanding debt, and total interest repaid as of today?

MS ORR: I can provide the outstanding balance of the loan. It is not necessarily as of today, but for the 26-27—actually, I am just going to take that on notice and check because I do not have the numbers for today.

MS VASSAROTTI: Minister, do you accept that this debt exacerbates the fact that public housing in the ACT has been chronically under-funded—noting that our stock is in the second-worse condition in the country, according to the Productivity Commission?

MS ORR: I do not accept the premise of the question or the way it is presented. The ACT government has received significant funding over many years from the commonwealth government, through a range of programs, to invest in community and public housing. The ACT government has also undertaken its own initiatives through programs such as Growing and Renewing, to improve the public housing stock within

the ACT and to establish a community housing provider ecosystem within the ACT. There has been a lot of work, and what I have come to really appreciate since taking on the portfolio is just how extensive that work is, around investing in our public housing.

The historic housing debt is a component of the overall portfolio and of the funding and the funding picture, but it is certainly not the only one and not the sole determinant of what investments are made.

Phillip—proposed 25-metre public pool

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Sports and Recreation. The existing Phillip pool is being replaced with a privately operated 25 metre public pool located in a major mixed-use development of around 700 apartments. Unlike a traditional government-owned public pool, key matters such as public access, opening hours, affordability, maintenance obligations and long-term operational responsibility will be determined through a future lease arrangement that has not yet been finalised. Minister, will the government publicly release the proposed lease conditions for community consultation before the existing pool is demolished, so that residents can be confident that public access, affordability, maintenance standards and long-term operations are protected for future generations?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I will take it on notice to get some advice from the Territory Planning Authority as to whether they would typically—or have a requirement under the Planning Act to—release that information for consultation. Of course, there is a requirement in the Planning Act for development applications to go on notification to provide an opportunity for the community to view those and make their comments through to the Territory Planning in making the decisions that they need to on development applications in relation to the design and siting DAs but also lease variation DAs. I understand there would be a requirement for one on this site and it would need to be notified.

MS CARRICK: Minister, if the operator determines that the pool is no longer commercially viable, who would be responsible for meeting operating deficits and ensure that the pool remains open? Will the lease require the owner to underwrite any losses, or is there a risk that ACT ratepayers will ultimately be asked to subsidise a privately-operated facility?

MR STEEL: There is a requirement in the Territory Plan for there to be a 25-metre indoor pool on this site, as well as other associated aquatic facilities. So it would then fall to Access Canberra to undertake enforcement of the lease on the site. In the meantime, the government is also undertaking planning on a government-owned pool, which is intended to be an 50-metre outdoor pool and would have other facilities as well. Work is underway for planning and looking for a site for the location of that facility. So it is intended that there would be multiple pools in Woden, to meet the growing needs of the population into the future.

Ms Carrick: Point of order, Mr Speaker. The question was about who would underwrite any losses of the 25-metre Geocon pool to ensure that it remains operating and that we do not have an empty commercial space.

MR SPEAKER: I thought the minister answered that by saying that it would be part of the lease conditions that they were required to do it. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

MR STEEL: No.

MS CLAY: Can the minister assure the Assembly that this proposal is not going to end up as a derelict facility like Big Splash?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Certainly the indications are, through the development application, that there will be substantial investment in a new pool that is available and open to the public on the site. This is welcome because, for a very long time—over several decades—there has been a concern about the state of that facility. In the early part of this century, there was an Assembly inquiry that looked at the future of the Phillip pool and noted significant concern over the viability of the facility in its current state and the need for investment in it. It also talked about the option of having an indoor pool to make it more viable all year round. So this has been an ongoing conversation. But now we have a proposal that has come forward. Of course, it needs to be assessed throughout the various stages of the development by the Territory Planning Authority.

The government is also committed to looking at another pool in the Woden Valley to serve the community as well. We will be making sure that we own a pool in the Woden Valley for use by the community and there will be private facilities as well. This is not the only private pool facility in Woden. Of course, there is the Stellar facility, owned by the Southern Cross Club in Phillip as well. So there are other pools around. But the government is also looking to own a pool in the Woden Valley area, and work is underway at the moment on the siting for that pool.

ACT Policing

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the minister for police. Minister, there are significant and growing concerns about crime throughout my electorate of Yerrabi. When passing these on to the Minister and her office, I have sought increased police patrols in areas such as Amaroo, Franklin, Harrison, Kaleen, Taylor, and the town centre. Could the minister please inform the chamber whether she passes on these requests to ACT Policing and what expectations she has about how they respond?

DR PATERSON: I absolutely do pass on all the correspondence that I get from the community and from other MLAs regarding policing operations. I do not direct police operationally. It is a decision for ACT Policing in terms of where they undertake operations or patrols, or how they assess the need and risk in certain areas. That is often the advice that I get back to respond to MLAs who have these requests—that it is a matter for ACT Policing.

MS CASTLEY: Does the minister seek or receive any follow-ups from ACT Policing about the actions they have taken in response to requests from members?

DR PATERSON: I have weekly briefings with ACT Policing around the issues that police are coming into contact with out in the community. They will raise with me

issues if they are seeing particular incidents and particular hotspots. A good example was when we were seeing the ovals being torn up by dirt bikes and things. That was raised with me, obviously through policing but also through the community, and then we discussed how we were going to address that and what police actions were going to be taken.

Ms Castley: A point of order. The question was whether she receives briefings after incidents that have been—

MR SPEAKER: I think there is a point of order here, because it is about whether you get a response to the correspondence rather than more generally on their operations.

DR PATERSON: Yes, and I reply to members with the advice from ACT Policing, and they will determine whether they think there are extra crime incidents occurring in a particular area that they need to focus on. If that is the circumstance, then I will receive follow-up briefings on the issue and continue to receive updates.

Corrections—electronic monitoring of alleged offenders

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Corrections.

Minister, last week your government decided to break another promise of introducing electronic monitoring to protect victims of domestic and family violence. The government undertook a feasibility study that found a full monitoring scheme had an annual cost of \$18 million, and high costs were ultimately cited as the reason for scrapping the program. Minister, what financial and public safety benefits did the feasibility study identify from implementing the scheme?

MS TOUGH: I thank Mrs Morris for the question. The ACT government remains broadly supportive of electronic monitoring as a community corrections tool and has undertaken significant work to understand how an electronic monitoring scheme could operate here in the territory. As Mrs Morris mentioned, extensive feasibility work has been undertaken, including market testing and stakeholder consultation with the domestic violence sector and more broadly across the community. It included consultation on the change of policy frameworks, including legal, human rights, police, corrections, domestic and family violence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice sectors. It looked at the—

Mrs Morris: Point of order: just on relevance, my question went specifically to the financial and safety benefits that the feasibility study found. I do not believe the minister has been directly relevant to that.

MR SPEAKER: Not yet. She is providing background information to the feasibility study. I am sure she is going to go directly to that now.

MS TOUGH: Going to the costing, the government found that because we do not have an electronic monitoring system as part of community corrections here in the ACT like other state and territory jurisdictions, the feasibility study also included the initial setup costs of a system and the base costs to monitor what was a relatively small number of offenders under community corrections supervision in the ACT community.

Discussions with the sector confirmed that domestic violence perpetrators were not the place to start electronic monitoring within the ACT community. It is something to build up to with an electronic monitoring system in the ACT. All these things together have led the government to the decision that electronic monitoring is not feasible at this time for domestic violence.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, what is the current average monetary cost of preventing a single domestic and family violence incident?

MS TOUGH: The ACT government invests in a broad range of domestic and family violence priorities in our community, from frontline services supporting our domestic, family and sexual violence services through to education and prevention programs. Key investments have included critical services for our victim-survivors through the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, CRCC, the YWCA and so many other services to victim-survivors. We have continued to invest this budget in domestic and family—

Mrs Morris: Point of order, Mr Speaker: again, it was just a simple question. I was just asking for the current average monetary cost of preventing an incident of domestic family violence. The minister has not addressed that; she has gone to talk about investments that the government has made.

MR SPEAKER: On the point of order, we have an answer on that.

MS TOUGH: Domestic and family violence, as Mrs Morris knows, is an extremely complex area in our community. There is no one single measure that helps someone or cost that goes to stopping family and domestic violence in our community. The government invests in prevention, it invests in education, it invests in frontline services and in our justice system because all of this together is how the government and the community together will work to stop and prevent family and domestic violence in our community. It is no one cost; it is a broad range of measures across our entire community that we are working on for stopping family and domestic violence.

Mr Cocks: Point of order: under 118AA, I do not believe the minister has actually answered the question about the average monetary cost of preventing a single domestic and family violence incident; rather, she has instead suggested that there are a range of costs.

MR SPEAKER: I think she responded to the question. She said there is not a singular cost. She said that there are a range of measures and that it is more complex than that. She has responded I think, Mr Cocks, and I think she has responded adequately.

MR CAIN: Minister, will you table the feasibility study and any other analysis that was relevant to this decision in the Assembly? If not, why? If so, when?

MS TOUGH: I will take on notice Mr Cain's questions about what can be tabled and when we can table it, but I am happy to share with the Assembly and the broader community the decisions and the consultation that are being made.

Corrections—enterprise bargaining

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, Canberra's prison officers have announced their intention to strike on 29 October, for the first time, citing a failure by your directorate to offer a reasonable pay deal. Minister, what actions are you taking to ensure that, if industrial action takes place, operational security will be maintained and prison staff, prisoners and the community are kept safe during disruptions?

MS TOUGH: I thank Mrs Morris for the question. I support all workers in taking their entitlements to industrial action. I think it is a really fundamental thing that people can exercise their right to take industrial action.

In the correction space, it does pose challenges around the safety of staff and detainees and the legislative requirements that underpin a functional corrections system. I know that Corrections are working closely with corrections officers ahead of any planned industrial action to ensure that all legislative requirements are met during any times of industrial action and that the safety of the detainees and the corrections officers who remain on site during that time are paramount, so that everyone is safe, the legal requirements are undertaken and employees are able to engage in industrial action, as they are entitled to do so.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, what actions are you taking to resolve the dispute before the strike occurs on 29 October?

MS TOUGH: I thank Mrs Morris for the question. I am frequently engaged with my corrections officials for updates on how bargaining is going and understanding where claims are at from the CPSU union and from corrections. I am working with them so the bargaining process can occur as required.

MR CAIN: Minister, do you retain confidence in your directorate's handling of this bargaining process?

MS TOUGH: Yes.

Crime—knife-related crime

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, this month we have already seen the stabbing of two teenagers in Calwell, an alleged samurai knife attack, and the stabbing of a young man in Belconnen. Additionally, the AFPA identified 15 knife-related incidents across Canberra in the first six months of 2026, yet the government repeatedly refuses to implement any proactive measures to help prevent knife-related crime, such as Jack's Law. Minister, when will the government act and give ACT Policing the tools and powers they need to help prevent knife-related crime?

DR PATERSON: Yes, some quite disturbing incidents have occurred across the community, and our thoughts are with the families and the individuals involved in those incidents. I would like to thank ACT Policing for responding to those incidents. There is law reform underway that the Attorney-General is progressing around wandering and around providing further powers to police to wand individuals for knives.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, does the government care about the victims of knife-related crime or only the human rights of criminals who commit knife-related crime?

DR PATERSON: I very much reject that question. As I said in answer to the first question, we care very deeply when these types of crimes occur in our community. Knife crime is deeply disturbing and incredibly dangerous, so we want to see a reduction in this type of crime. We will continue to work on our legislative framework, in terms of how we address knife crime.

MR CAIN: Minister, how many more knife crime victims will it take before you take some prompt and immediate action?

DR PATERSON: As I said, the Attorney-General is progressing legislation to address this exact issue.

Carers—support

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Minister, last week was National Carers Week. Can you outline the importance of carers to the ACT, and what actions the ACT government has taken to support these vital community members?

MS TOUGH: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question. As Mr Werner-Gibbings knows, last week, 11-17 October, was National Carers Week, when we honour and acknowledge the important work that our carers do in our community each and every day. This year's theme, "Care for a Carer: Making Carers Visible" highlights and reminds us that carers are often the unseen backbone of our communities and support systems. It calls on us—government, organisations, employers, families and communities—to ensure carers themselves are seen, heard and supported. So, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the carers in our community and acknowledge the work that they do each and every day.

While we can quote statistics in this place, around the number of hours of care provided every year and how many carers there are in our community, it does not do justice to the impact of the contribution all our carers make—and continue to make.

Mr Werner-Gibbings asked how the government is continuing to support carers. I am really pleased to say the ACT government is continuing to partner with Carers ACT to deliver the ACT Carer Strategy and its final action plan which I released during Carers Week last week. Through this plan, we will continue to improve recognition of carers, increase community awareness and strengthen access to services and supports. The government is committed to making carers more visible and ensuring they receive the support they need.

I want to thank the previous minister for community service, Minister Orr, for the work she has put into the Carers Strategy and the Carers Action Plan before I took on the portfolio.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, can you outline the actions the ACT government committed to as part of the final action plan for the ACT Carers Strategy?

MS TOUGH: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbins for the supplementary. The final action plan of the ACT Carers Strategy outlines nine key actions to deliver on four priority areas which include: improving access to services and supports for carers; strengthening recognition of carers and raising community awareness on the important work carers do; supporting our younger carers; and enhancing the data coordination and system capability.

To deliver on these areas, the nine actions include: exploring options for a purpose-built carer wellbeing and respite hub—including identifying options for a potential site, and working with Carers ACT to do; exploring the feasibility of a mentoring program that supports our young carers to continue their education and find meaningful employment; strengthening collaboration with advisory bodies and organisations representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and LGBTIQ+ communities to identify carers and enable the sharing of de-identified carer data and insights; and promoting the carer-inclusive workplace initiative to the ACT public service staff to encourage workplaces to use the resources to collectively support colleagues who are carers. Importantly, this action plan has been designed, and will be delivered in partnership with carers and their representative bodies, like Carers ACT.

To support this important work, I am pleased that the 2026-27 provides support for the advocacy for carers of people with disability, ensuring that carers' voices and experiences are reflected in policies, programs and services.

MS BERRY: Minister, how will the government continue to deliver for carers beyond 2028 and ensure that vital supports continue?

MS TOUGH: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. I and the ACT government remain committed to ensuring that carers are recognised and supported now and well into the future. As we work through the final action plan, we are reviewing the implementation of the current strategy with a focus on whether or not it achieved the objectives that we set out, and how we can take those learnings and lock in achievements, and build on that success with our carers in the community.

Most importantly, we will ensure we continue to build upon the close collaborations that we have built over this term of the current strategy. It is only through this kind of collaboration across government, across the community sector, across education providers and employers, and across our community more generally that we can achieve the kinds of results we need, to support carers in our community. It is on all of us in this place and across the ACT to work together so that carers are seen, and they are heard and they are valued—and make sure that those who support others are supported themselves.

Public schools—funding

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, during estimates, you and the Education Directorate's Director-General, Ms Jo Wood, indicated that the directorate would be providing a road map for the implementation of the recommendations of the resourcing review "by September". Minister, it is now

October and we have not received any communications on this road map. Why hasn't this road map been released and when will it be?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. The Education Directorate had previously indicated that they were intending to release an implementation plan by the end of September. We have done some further work in relation to bringing together the implementation of the schools resourcing review, the Stronger Foundations work and the Inclusive Education Strategy and have had a roundtable with public education stakeholders where we discussed a draft road map. The clear feedback that we received was that there was further work that was required, both to provide some further detail but also to restructure the way that that was being envisaged. Therefore, yes, that has not been released at this point; that work is ongoing. I thank Mr Braddock for the opportunity to provide that update.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, will that road map, when finalised, be published? When is that likely to happen?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Yes, absolutely. We are referring to it as an implementation plan. Yes, it will be published. I cannot provide a firm time line on that. Obviously, the officials who are engaged in this work are also very busily engaged in the work to finalise school budgets by week 5, including undertaking a range of risk assessment processes as that work is done between the Education Directorate and schools, including in relation to the inclusion work, support for students with disability, work health and safety, staffing and other factors. So I think this work will be being done somewhat in the background while school budget work is being finalised.

But I do want to reassure Mr Braddock and the rest of the Assembly that the work is continuing in terms of the implementation of Stronger Foundations, the Inclusive Education Strategy and the response to the schools resourcing review. But, in terms of putting that into a document, that is probably going to take a few more weeks than we expected.

MS VASSAROTTI: When will the Education Directorate prioritise transparency and accountability with the review's recommendations? Will we be able to get a final timeline around the release of this road map?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Vassarotti for the question, but I am disappointed about the way that she has phrased it. Minister Berry released an interim government response to the report very quickly with the public school system resourcing review that provided the direction that the government was intending to go. We then had the round table with public education stakeholders on 25 September. We have recognised very clearly the scale of change that will be required and are committed to supporting staff and school communities through staged and carefully managed implementation.

This is a very big reform process. The Education Directorate is reprioritising existing resources to uplift its implementation capability to deliver on these commitments over the next two years. While I recognise that the directorate has not met the initial expectation around delivering an implementation plan by the end of September, I think everyone in this place would understand that there is a lot of work underway currently in the directorate. I am certainly supportive of our very hardworking public servants in

ensuring that we get this process right and we take account of all of the other pressures in the system as we undertake this work. Ms Vassarotti would be very well aware of my ongoing commitment to transparency, and I will bring that to this work as well.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—employee found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct

MS BARRY: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, earlier this year, the Integrity Commission released its long-awaited Operation Kingfisher report. The report found that Joshua Ceramidas has engaged in serious corrupt conduct. The report found that Mr Ceramidas's actions could, "constitute serious disciplinary offences or provide reasonable grounds for dismissing Mr Ceramidas or dispensing with or otherwise terminating his services"

Attorney-General, is Mr Ceramidas still employed in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, and if not, when did his employment end?

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, perhaps I might seek your ruling, but, nevertheless, I will not be commenting on an individual's employment arrangements. It would not be appropriate.

MR SPEAKER: I do not think there is any parliamentary ruling on that in terms of the standing orders, but if that is your decision, then that is an answer—

Mr Cain: Take it on notice?

MR SPEAKER: No; she is saying that she is not going to answer it because it relates to an individual—

Ms Barry: So she doesn't know who is employed in her directorate?

MR SPEAKER: That is her answer Ms Barry—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Is there a supplementary, Ms Barry?

MS BARRY: Is Mr Ceramidas still employed in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, given serious findings of serious corrupt conduct?

MS CHEYNE: I will seek advice, Mr Speaker, but I think it would set an extraordinary precedent for any person in this place to be commenting on an individual's employment arrangements.

MR CAIN: Attorney-General, are you aware of any other individuals in addition to Mr Ceramidas who have been found guilty of corrupt or criminal behaviour and are still employed in your directorate?

MR SPEAKER: Attorney-General?

Mr Cain: You can take it on notice if you like.

MS CHEYNE: Fine. I take it on notice.

Majura Primary School—funding

MS VASSAROTTI: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, the Majura Primary School community is deeply disappointed that your recent modernisation announcement fell well short of expectations following years of broken promises. The comprehensive school infrastructure plan recommended by the school resourcing review is still yet to be seen or scheduled. While the government promised a full school refurbishment, all it has delivered is a contract with Projex Building Group for a new library, completely ignoring the top consultation priorities like heating and cooling, which parents warned in 2025 left classrooms below safety standards. Minister, when will urgent heating, cooling and classroom improvements actually be delivered for students at Majura Primary?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am not sure that Ms Vassarotti is correct in relation to the works underway. What I can advise is that the Majura Primary School modernisation upgrade works will be commencing in late 2026. I will see if I can find some more information in relation to the detail of those works.

What I can say, having had a number of conversations with Majura Primary parents and the community during the 2024 election, when this was quite a significant issue, is that I recognise that parents and the school community at the time felt that they had not been appropriately consulted by the Education Directorate and that they were not happy with the direction that the project was heading in at that time. The commitment that has now been made and the modernisation project that is now committed to and that is commencing in late 2026 does directly respond to the feedback that was received through the subsequent engagement with the school community last year.

MS VASSAROTTI: We understand that the directorate has said that they will only release the heating and cooling infrastructure audit by the end of this year rather than delivering actual upgrades. What is the directorate preparing for classrooms in time for this summer?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Can Ms Vassarotti please repeat the question, which I think had a preamble, so I only want the question.

MR SPEAKER: That is a fair comment. A supplementary does not have a preamble, so you just need to ask the question without a preamble or rephrase it.

MS VASSAROTTI: What is the directorate preparing for classrooms in time for this summer around heating and cooling?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The heating and cooling programs are underway. Obviously this is something where we would all like for everything to be able to be done all at once, but the directorate is working with Infrastructure Canberra to procure and deliver tier 3 school infrastructure projects right now, which include heating and cooling upgrades at Weetangera Primary School, Latham Primary School, Hawker Primary

School and Wanniasa Hills Primary School through the Electrification of Government Gas Assets Program and the \$15 million public school heating and cooling fund. It is a fact that you can both be doing work to assess the needs right across our school infrastructure portfolio and implementing changes at the same time, and that is exactly what is occurring.

MS CLAY: Minister, when will the comprehensive school infrastructure plan be released in line with recommendation 18 of the resourcing review?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: That is something that we are working through in relation to the full response and implementation plan for the public school system resourcing review in terms of how we stage and time this work. I am not able to answer that question at this point in time, but that information will be available later this year as we release the implementation plan.

Transport Canberra—passenger experience

MS BERRY: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I know you have been waiting for this one. It has been 12 years.

My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on how the ACT government is working to improve public transport services from the passenger's perspective?

MR SPEAKER: Well worth waiting for.

MS CHEYNE: I warmly thank Ms Berry for the question.

For passengers, a good public transport system is not just about whether a bus or light rail service operates. It is whether it turns up when expected, whether the information is accurate, whether paying the fare is straightforward and whether people can get where they need to go with confidence. That is the lens through which I am applying my efforts to this portfolio.

We are preparing for the testing and commissioning of light rail stage 2A which will obviously impact the bus network and we are planning for the bus network following the completion of works on Commonwealth Avenue Bridge next year. But there is also plenty that we can improve about the experience of using the network that we have today. That includes more reliable journey planning, accurate timetables and real-time information, clearer communications when services are disrupted and making it easier for passengers to find the information and the assistance that they need.

Transport Canberra is developing a new customer service plan and it will be drawing directly on recommendations from the Public Transport Association of Canberra as well as the experiences of frontline staff.

And we are taking a much more disciplined approach to resolving outstanding issues with MyWay+. I have made it clear directly to NEC that I expect clear responsibilities, stronger escalation arrangements and transparent reporting against measurable outcomes. I do recognise that people's confidence in the system has been affected and

that rebuilding it requires more than promises about future improvements. Ultimately, I want passengers to spend less time worrying about whether their bus is coming, whether their information is correct or whether they have been charged the right fare. It should be something Canberrans can always rely on without having to think twice about it.

MS BERRY: Minister, what action is the government taking to improve MyWay+ and ensure its contractor delivers the standard of service passengers deserve?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. While MyWay+ has improved since its launch, there are still significant issues to resolve, and I am not satisfied with how long some of those issues have been taking.

Earlier this month, as I foreshadowed last month, I met directly with NEC's Australian CEO, Keith Morrison, and the Chief Commercial Officer, Milan Djuricic. I told them that the relationship needed a reset and that I expected a fundamental and measurable improvement in accountability, transparency and delivery. Importantly, NEC has in its response affirmed its end-to-end responsibility for the contracted system, including the work of its delivery partners. Passengers should not have to navigate the complexities of different suppliers and nor should Transport Canberra, its staff and its drivers. We contracted for an integrated system and that is what I expect NEC to deliver.

NEC has now proposed a dedicated remediation program with named responsibilities and clearer escalation pathways. Transport Canberra and Digital Canberra are working through that proposal before those arrangements are agreed. The test I am applying to this work is evidence of improvement, not another round of assurances. For NEC to demonstrate that it can be the reliable partner that the territory needs will depend on whether passengers and whether Transport Canberra staff experience a materially better service.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how is the government working with public transport users to identify and deliver practical improvements to the passenger experience?

MS CHEYNE: I think one of the clearest lessons, and clearest documented lessons, from MyWay+ is that consulting passengers is not enough if their feedback does not genuinely influence what gets delivered. The Public Transport Association of Canberra has recently provided an excellent detailed report on customer service, identifying practical improvements that would make a real difference to people's everyday journeys. Some of these are relatively straightforward: clearer information at bus stops, more accurate timetables, better journey planning, a more usable website and better communication when services change or things go wrong, which they can do. I have asked Transport Canberra to work directly with the association, as well as with our frontline customer experience staff, to turn this feedback into practical priorities through the new customer service plan.

I also want us to do a much better job of testing changes with the people who will actually use them, particularly passengers with a disability, older Canberrans, families and others who may face barriers to accessing our services. Importantly, I want us to close the loop with passengers, so they can see what has changed as a result of their

feedback.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—employee found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct

MS BARRY: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, I refer to the legal action commenced by Joshua Ceramidas against the Integrity Commission in the Federal Court, including the case management hearing held on Friday. Attorney-General, is the ACT government paying the legal fees of Mr Ceramidas in this action against the Integrity Commission? If so, how much are the fees?

MS CHEYNE: I want to be absolutely confident in my answer, so I will take the question on notice.

MS BARRY: Attorney-General, have you received a request to be a respondent in this matter? If so, what was your response to that request?

MS CHEYNE: I would like to seek some legal advice on this before I respond to the chamber. I will take it on notice.

MR CAIN: Attorney-General, could you also provide advice on what role, of any type or character at all with this legal matter, you or any of your directorate are taking?

MS CHEYNE: I will take it on notice.

Mr Barr: Further questions can be placed on the notice paper.